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REMARKS TANGENT TO A  
" THESIS EXHIBITION OF PAINTINGS

by

Rita Bennett  
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Approved by

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APPROVAL SHEET

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BENNETT, RITA. Remarks Tangent to a Thesis Exhibition of Paintings.  
(1965) Directed by: Gilbert Carpenter. pp. 5.

The thesis consists of remarks which are tangent to an exhibition of fourteen small casein and liquitex paintings. These remarks fall into three main divisions. The first part is general and concerns my relation to the work. The second includes some considerations for the development of a personal vocabulary. In the third, I choose two of my works from the exhibition and discuss them in relation to the paintings which inspired them. A 35mm color slide of each painting in the exhibit is included.

An approximate chronological list of works in the exhibit includes the artist from whom each was taken, its title, dimensions, and media.



# CATALOGUE

	Artist	Title	Media	Dimensions
1.	Picasso	Abstract Head	casein	9 x 11 1/4
2.	R. Bennett	Yellow Cup	liquitex	6 1/4 x 13 1/4
3.	Giorgione	Venus in a Landscape	liquitex	14 x 8 1/2
4.	Rembrandt	Saskia at a Window	liquitex	19 1/2 x 13
5.	Rembrandt	Saskia at a Window	liquitex	13 1/2 x 19 1/2
6.	R. Bennett	Ginny	casein	18 1/2 x 13
7.	Picasso	Girl Before a Mirror	casein	19 1/4 x 13
8.	Cezanne	Madame Cezanne in a Garden	casein	10 1/2 x 13 3/4
9.	Cezanne	Mardi Gras	casein	18 3/4 x 13 1/4
10.	Raphael	Alba Madonna	casein	10 3/4 x 7 3/4
11.	Rubens	Three Figures in a Landscape	casein	14 1/2 x 19 3/4
12.	Braque	Still Life	casein	19 3/4 x 15 1/4
13.	R. Bennett	Bud McDaniel	casein	22 x 15 1/2
14.	Gericault	Heads of Guillotined Men	liquitex	24 3/4 x 18 3/4

When we speak about nature we must not forget that we are a part of it and that we must look at ourselves with as much curiosity and sincerity as if we were looking at a tree, a sky, or an idea. Because there is a relationship between ourselves and the rest of the universe, we can discover it and then no longer try to go beyond it.<sup>1</sup>

Apollinaire

A dim persistent knowledge of perfected rhythms, of right relations, of suspended and magical unions demands my concern. I do not conceive of art as a counterpart of life, something exchangeable for it. It is rather a hopeful activity which our mind originates in order to hold to the possibility of reconciliation with the sensuous world beyond us. It is an intention to subject the immediate and present sensations of our consciousness to the process of a singular formation and capture a personal coherence from the passing moments.

My temperament calls for the making of pictures. Desire moves me to search for the secret laws of nature which are hidden in my spirit and reveal to consciousness correspondences between myself and the rest of the universe.

Acceptance of the intrinsic values of the painters medium and emphasis upon pictorial imagination has increasingly deprived pictures of the finite actualities of nature as models for articulation and unity.

The moment we take up the look of things, we impose a limitation which diminishes the arbitrary framework of the imaginary and respond to a need for finding new correspondences amid the relative. The intention to create a resemblance, an image, which

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<sup>1</sup>Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Matisse: His Art and His Public (The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1951), p. 101.

bears relation to autonomous existence of things, is an expression of a desire to approach a world lost to modern man, the one in which his senses dwell.

The more intent we are to recreate the image in its finite associations without diminishing the direct approach and spontaneous breath of fundamental means, the more restricted our choices will be. Following the need to bring out the main features, one must be able to grasp suddenly from a welter of possibilities a single living and rhythmic basis and watch over its development until it is able to take over and dynamically fulfill the total picture space.

To accomplish this, the eye must learn calmness, and evolve judgments around habits of seeing and clarifying the interplay and balances between the look of things, the limitations of the medium, and personal requirements. The process is one of synthesis and simplification.

Things in nature have a natural charm and countenance. The atmosphere unifies so unerringly that it would be impossible to isolate a view which did not have its rightness. The most dissonant forms are softened, the most unexpected view accepted. The interchange of solid forms and encompassing air is dynamic, yet deceptively so. Appearance remains continuous.

Flux and change are not obvious, and ordinarily they may be pushed from awareness and not dealt with. But no form can be found in nature which encompasses the order which we seek for ourselves. Form is present in painting when all of its aspects sustain one another and the illusion of equilibrium radiates. It is made out of the relations of harmonious interactions which energies bear to one another. In the attempt to transpose bodies in a continuous space to a two dimensional field, we become aware of these energies, and discover the countless permutations neces-

sary to reconcile differences. These interactions give life to the form.<sup>2</sup>

#### Personal Considerations For the Development of a Technical Vocabulary:

##### The drawing:

Keep sense of the natural proportion of things and make modifications which will maintain the value of a dominant interest.

Dispose the objects on planes which overlap and interrelate. Indicate position but not volume. Leave this to the color.

Subordinate the disposition of forms to the most dynamic activation of the picture surface.

Allow the drawing to respond to the possibilities of rhythmic gesture.

Take a vantage point which retains the ease of objects in their environment.

##### Color and Plasticity:

Establish plastic and chromatic dominants but develop those interests throughout. A general tonal atmosphere precedes the volume.

Consider the vigorous movement of the color first. Require it to subdue contours or bring form sharply to the surface according to the requirements of the dominant intent.

Rely on a delicacy of touch to differentiate pictorial passages. Soften transitions and secondary parts to correspond to more natural effects.

Equate qualities of color with qualities in nature. Suggest strength and density as in a rock or cup, fluidity as in water, or drapery, transparency and luminosity as in the light.

Build the illusion of depth and movement by contrasting planes of color.

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<sup>2</sup>Egbert Jacobson and Paul Theobald, Basic Color (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), p. 58.



Make continuities of things which lie at different depths. Keep the illusion of continuous space. Avoid describing actual forms. Plasticity of actual bodies should grow from a plastic picture arrangement, be reconstituted by the interaction of color progressions. Keep the arrangements tentative, flexible until the appearance of an architecturally sensible image absorbs the disparate movements and the radiance of the relations is apparent.

#### Subject Matter:

Eleven of the fourteen works chosen for my exhibit are developments of personal form from existing works of art. The original set of relations remains only a suggestion in every case.. A small non-color study of Raphael retains a closer relationship than any of the others to the image from which it was derived.

I considered the pre-existing harmonies as if they were elements in a still-life whose forms were established and yet were open and flexible in terms of new color relationships. In the studies, I separated the color from the form of the original works and tried to give the color its own life, one which relied on its particular qualities and measurements.

In the study from Picasso's "Girl Before A Mirror," an area of bright red which corresponds to the red defining the stomach of the mirror-image is the stable point around which my picture evolved. All considerations are in relation to it. Red and its modification toward pinks is predominant in terms of the area it fills, but the emphatic yellow and softer yellow greys appear a more dynamic voice.

There is only a trace of Picasso's white, and his black becomes Paynes grey in my work and moves closer to the blues.

The grey yellow which holds traces of green crowds out the blue in the mirror image head and moves towards the bright green

which appears deep in the picture. The blue then reappears underneath the yellow and replaces Picasso's white in the lower part of the mirror. Lavenders and light grey red-browns soften the distance between the red and blue. The color overflows boundaries which in the Picasso contain it. The color patterns are broken open and a sense of the process of the painting's growth kept alive.

Cezanne had already done this. In my study from Madame Cezanne in the Garden," the feeling of light and air is much more pronounced. His clearly differentiated tones give way to a variety of greyed colors from which small areas of brighter colors seem to emerge. After many months of looking at my own studies, I identify a basic desire hidden beneath them all ---- to make certain colors emerge from and others disappear into an atmosphere which corresponds to a sense of nature.



Picasso Abstract  
Head



R. Bennett yellow Cup



GIORGIONE Venus in a  
Landscape



Rembrandt Saskia  
at a  
Window  
#1



Rembrandt Saskia  
at a  
Window  
#2



R. Bennett Ginny



Picasso GIRL Before  
a MIRROR





Cézanne Madame  
Cézanne in  
a Garden



Cézanne Mardi  
Gras



Raphael Alba Madonna



Rubens Three figures  
in a Landscape



Baigne

Still-life



Bud McDaniel



Gerikant

Heads of  
Guillotined Men